

**DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
LEPC REPORT
(Drafted 18 December 2006)**

Public Safety Communications: Installation of the new Dispatch console & VC Hill repeater has been completed. There were numerous “glitches” early in the game but Bridger Communications, the contractor, thinks that any remaining problems are more part of the learning curve than actual technological problems. On 15 December we received a license for the frequency to be used at the new VHF repeater in Big Sky. We are hoping to get that radio up and running within the next week or so. We also hope to get the new South Madison repeater (to be located in MVRFD FH#2) installed before the end of the year. This will complete the current phase of our public safety communications upgrade, however there are more phases to come (hopefully).

Meanwhile, we are working on nailing down agreements for the three micro-wave sites that are to be installed in Madison County as part of the state’s Interoperable Montana program. Two of those sites (Barter Ranch and VC Pass) are intended to be shared with existing FAA installations, however the FAA is dragging its feet and we are looking at other alternatives for siting. Moonlight Basin’s Chris Leonard has reported that, in addition to a place for a tower on the very peak of Lone Mountain, they have a site they might be willing to make available for the building and power supply just 700 feet or so down slope. This would provide the third county microwave site. Once this is all nailed down, the next step will be to seek ways in which Madison County might be able to take advantage of the tremendous capability access to a statewide micro-wave loop might bring us.

The final step in the FY 06 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) award brought disappointment to us. We were on track to receive to replace all the fire and EMS radios in the County, however it was determined that because I wrote the application while acting as a county employee, the originator wasn’t really a fire or EMS department so we were ineligible. Had I been a paid private contractor or something, the county fire departments and ambulance services might well be the recipients of some \$435,000. As it is, we are tentatively thinking in terms of recycling roughly the same application for the next grant period, only this time we won’t have any hint of county involvement if we can avoid it.

Radio Inventory: The county-wide inventory of all radios in use for public safety purposes in our County (that I mentioned last month) is proceeding slowly and is well behind schedule. While there is some doubt as to the ultimate productivity of this effort, the intent is that we would receive upgraded replacement equipment from the urban centers of Montana that are shifting to trunking (which requires new radios, for the most part). This becomes all the more important as a result of the set-back in the AFG award outlined in the previous paragraph. I ask all those in a position to influence such things to encourage your local fire and ambulance services to complete the inventory and get the results to me as soon as possible.

Big Sky: The final report of the Big Sky Public Safety Planning Study undertaken by Firescope Mid-America is to be presented to the Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, 19 December. Much of the report calls for a continuation (with refinements) of existing arrangements for public safety services in Big Sky, citing lack of infrastructure and command, control and communications capability within Madison County to handle such an increase in responsibility were the County to assume a more direct role and also a lack of operational capability to do so, particularly given the potential for large events and the high level of expectations in that area. The report does, however, outline that this could well change in the next few years and calls for a reassessment and, perhaps, realignment at such time as that occurs. The communications improvements

previously discussed in this report, along with a new or upgraded Dispatch and EOC would go a long way toward meeting such criteria for reconsideration.

CCC/CERT: Melinda Tichenor will report on the activity of CCC and CERT training. She and her Council are developing a business plan for the program and seeking alternative sources of financial support, now that Homeland Security funding has dried up for this program. This will be a topic of discussion at this Thursday's meeting.

School Emergency Radios: The federal government has initiated a program to give every school in the country a radio receiver to allow early notification of weather and other potential emergencies that might affect the schools using NOAA weather repeaters. Unfortunately, almost all of Madison County lacks reliable coverage from the existing repeaters in Dillon, Butte and Bozeman. We have been negotiating with NOAA/NWS to get an additional repeater installed in our county and have recently been told that such a repeater can be made available. Once it has been installed, the individual school radios will be made available to our schools.

Disaster and Emergency Plan: We have been working on completing the remaining annexes to the County Disaster and Emergency Plan. The Communications Annex will be available for review at the meeting. The Flooding Annex is about half done and a copy of it will be available for suggestions.

Director Position: Chris Mumme, of Sheridan, has reported aboard and will assume the duties of Director of Emergency Management on 1 January. I will at that time drop to the half-time position of Public Safety Communications Coordinator for the county. Chris plans to attend the Thursday meeting.

Vice-Chairman Position: John Bancroft will not be able to attend either the December or January meetings. He has, however, indicated that he would accept the LEPC Vice-Chairmanship position if the group still wants him to do so.